

WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE THE MOAI?

Len Sharp and Fran Nottage

During the Spring of 2004, Liverpool High School Freshman Annex (700 students) was taken over by twenty-five replicas of Easter Island's statues. This was the result of the "moai project, initiated by art instructor Fran Nottage and Earth Sciences teacher Len Sharp. The following Easter Island Foundation objectives were achieved as a result of the Project:

- To work toward the preservation of Easter Island's cultural heritage and environmental character as well as historic sites and monuments of Polynesia.
- To inform and educate with regard to Easter Island's unique heritage and monumental treasures (sp., The moai in our Project).

During the austral winter of 2003, Len Sharp, with the assistance of a District's Professional Development Grant (LPDG), was funded to visit and study firsthand the uniqueness of the "most isolated permanently inhabited area" found on Earth. In the fall of 2003, Sharp made several PowerPoint presentations concerning the geology, environment, history, and culture of the island to regional service clubs, classrooms, state conferences, and also wrote an article that was published in the State of New York Science Teacher's Association Bulletin (Fall 2003).

While Fran Nottage and Len were discussing the moai of Easter Island one day in the hallway, they came up with the idea to have students, [1] study through online research (e.g.: Easter Island Foundation's web site) and selected books (e.g.: *The Enigmas of Easter Island*): [2] construct models of selected moai that are found around Rapa Nui at various ahu: and, upon completion, strategically place the moai throughout the school.

Ms. Nottage established the ground rules for the gathering of data and construction of the moai replicas. The students had to go to Easter Island Foundation's website to gather data and photographs of the moai. Following are some of the factors the students were asked to pay attention to in their data collection: composition, tools, stylistic form, size, shape, mass, quarry traits, and "theories" of moai relocation to ahu.

The moai models had to be "one foot [30.5 cm]" for every student participating in the construction of a specific moai. [e.g. seven students construct a seven-foot moai] The statues' templates were constructed out of cardboard, wrapped in plaster of Paris strips and then painted with a rock-textured spray to simulate rock. The twenty-five completed moai were placed in the school's hallways, atriums, classrooms, library, and outside the building. Each area with a moai had a brief write-up explaining what moai are and where they are found. Moai were also located in history, art, science, and classroom settings selected for permanent display. Five to six moai were loaned-out to a neighboring school district for an elementary school's festive end-of-the-year luau.

Five moai of various sizes are on display for four months at the regional offices of NYSUT (New York State United Teachers Union) in the building's main entrance. The moai were requested by NYSUT following an article in the local

newspaper (*The Post-Standard*).

Media coverage of the Moai Project was terrific! Great PR for the students, staff and school: a lead story on Local/Regional News Section of *Post-Standard Newspaper* and well-written articles with photographs in the *Liverpool Review* and *Skaneateles Press* (50-60,000 readership).

A future article will be featured in the NYSUT Fall Newsletter (readership of 500,000) with photos of staff and students plus a written portion describing the objectives of the Project.

Without question, our two objectives were clearly accomplished with the students, staff, and school's community. The Moai Project has served as a springboard for a new venture in 2004-05. Art, science, technology and history will collaborate on an interdisciplinary module(s) dealing with the "common" environmental and cultural factors for the "rise and fall" a few selected ancient societies, such as; Roman, Greek, Egyptian, Chinese, Incan and/or Mayan.

The adventure of learning continues.



Emily Mastrobattisto, Kaitlin Kochanek, Fran Nottage, Kara Kulba, Len Sharp, and Megan Rogers pose with one of their moai figures..

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